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Estimates of the Character of David

D. F. Payne

Even the most casual reader of the Old Testament would probably pick up a two-sided impression of King David, as on the one hand a great man with many good qualities, and yet a man who on at least one occasion, the Bathsheba affair, showed himself to be the very reverse of an ideal ruler. Probably the casual reader would see the former side of the picture as the dominant one, but that might depend on one's subjective reaction to deeds of adultery and murder. In any case, it might not be too easy to decide, in the black-and-white terms of Sellars and Yeatman, whether David was "a good thing" or "a bad thing".

1. The Pre-critical Estimate

It is nevertheless clear enough that the traditional viewpoint concerning David has been largely favourable. In an extended entry on David in the Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, for example, one half-sentence suffices for the black side of the picture: "Though at times David committed deep-dyed sins, for which the early and comparatively dark period of the Church's history in which he lived and his own deep penitence are his only defense, yet his general fidelity to Jehovah was such" (and the positive assessment is resumed).

There are one or two significant points here. Firstly, the writer feels it his moral duty in some way to "defend" David; secondly, he finds it a little difficult; thirdly, he is driven to appeal to the "early" and "dark" period in which David lived (i.e., people did not really know better in those days); fourthly, it is implied (by the use of the word "general") that quantitatively David's virtuous behaviour was typical of the man - the "deep-dyed sins" were thankfully rare; and fifthly he emphasizes that

David showed "deep penitence".

Most of these angles could have been drawn directly from the Books of Samuel. To suggest that David's period as a dark age is a rather modern and perhaps naively arrogant standpoint, but it is certainly the case that in Sam. 12:13 David expresses his penitence, or at least confesses his sin as regards Bathsheba and Uriah. And the sorry Bathsheba episode occupies a relatively small part of the many chapters dedicated to the story of David, so that the quantitative argument is easily made.

On further analysis, however, it is clear that this sort of estimate of David is based not only on the portrait of him in the books of Samuel but no less upon other Old Testament material about him. The quantitative argument is powerfully reinforced by the well-known fact that the books of Chronicles suppress the whole Bathsheba episode: Chron. 20:1 reproduces 2 Sam. 11:1, but then the chronicler jumps immediately to the material found in Sam. 12:36. The penitential argument, which rests on just a single verse in Samuel (2 Sam. 12:13), is built up strongly by the famous penitential psalm to be found in the psalter as Ps. 51, which is not only attributed to David but explicitly linked to the Bathsheba episode by the Psalm title.

It was of course natural enough, indeed inevitable, for Jewish and Christian tradition to draw its portrait of David from all the biblical materials available. Within the Old Testament tradition itself, it was no less natural for the portrait of David to become a rosier one with the passage of time, and for a halo to be set about his head. One major factor in this development was undoubtedly the fact that the Psalter as a whole came to be associated with his name. The books of Samuel notice David's musicianship at the beginning of his story (1 Sam. 16:16-23), though as an instrumentalist not a composer; and almost at the end of his story they incorporate two psalms of his (2 Sam. 2:2-23:7). The second of them goes so far as to call him "The sweet psalmist of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1 RSV), though

this sense is open to dispute.¹ But otherwise this is an aspect of David's life which is irrelevant to the narratives of Samuel. There can be little doubt that in course of time the rich religious and spiritual content of the Psalter added a whole dimension to the way in which David was perceived. A brutal and self-seeking ruler could well have written a book like Mein Kampf; but if a book of deeply devotional poetry came to be linked with the name of Adolf Hitler, our descendants might well be inclined to revise the image of Hitler which they had inherited from the "historical books", so to speak, of our time. Small wonder, really, that David came to figure among the "heroes of faith" listed in Heb. 11 in the New Testament.

In some quarters, attempts have been made to exculpate David even further.² It has sometimes been argued that no decent woman would have engaged in toilet activities on her all-too-visible rooftop - in other words, David was more the victim than the aggressor. It is hard to know what the cultural norms were in ancient Jerusalem, of course, and nothing is said in 2 Samuel as to Bathsheba's attitudes, thoughts, feelings or morals. But even if we follow this exegetical option, we do not in fact greatly benefit the portrait of David; if he was not greedy and wilful, then he was weak and easily led. However, the thrust of Nathan's parable strongly suggests that he was the former rather than the latter: he is there portrayed as the rich man who made away with his poor neighbour's ewe-lamb. There is not the slightest hint that the ewe-lamb had any say in the matter.

2. The Historian's Estimate

If it was natural for the layman, Jewish or Christian, to utilize all the biblical data in building up his

1. Hebrew n^e'îm zimrôt yisrâ'êl could mean "the favourite of the songs of Israel" (RSVmg), i.e. their hero rather than their composer, but this seems less likely in context and is not generally preferred.

2. See for instance Keil and Delitzsch, Biblical Commentary on the Books of Samuel, (1950 edition), p. 383.

portrait and interpretation of David, it was equally predictable that the modern critical historian would do otherwise. Plainly for him the books of Samuel constitute the primary source of information, with Chronicles very much secondary, and anything else negligible. Moreover, he would scarcely take even Samuel at face value, and by the very nature of his trade he would want to investigate whether the hero of yesteryear had after all feet of clay.

If one takes an objective standpoint, then, being as ready to accept the immoral or amoral deeds of David as any virtuous ones, one finds that much of the career of David, as recorded in Samuel, is rather ambiguous. If one adopted a thorough-going cynicism, one might end up with a remarkably black view of David, something like this:

Finding himself (by whatever route) at Saul's court, David quickly developed political aspirations, and set about undermining Saul's authority. He unscrupulously manipulated two of Saul's family, Jonathan and Michal, to further his ambitions, setting both of them against their father. Saul was not deceived, however, and forced David to flee from the court. David's response was not to flee into exile, however, but to raise a marauding band of guerrilla soldiery, who lived by ruthlessness, treachery, and a blatant protection racket in southern Judah. A rich farmer who tried to thwart him was attacked and killed - and David did not hesitate to marry the rich widow. Without the slightest conscience, David next switched his allegiance to the Philistines, offering his troops' services as mercenaries. Quite possibly he raided Judaeen farms and settlements, and he may even have fought against the Israelite army at the battle of Gilboa. Nevertheless he succeeded in overtures to the tribe of Judah, and as a result managed to take the throne of Judah, when by rights it should have owed allegiance to Saul's son and successor Ishbosheth (or Eshbaal). He then fought against the latter and engineered his downfall by means of machinations with several of Ishbosheth's senior officers. He thus achieved the throne of the whole of Israel, upon which he speedily eliminated these officers, and in due course found a pretext for decimating the survivors of Saul's family.

Once he had defeated the Philistines in battle, he proved just as ruthless and opportunist in his relationships with other local states, and thus created an empire for himself. Against all this, his treatment of Bathsheba and Uriah, far from being the black spot on an otherwise impeccable career, seems almost negligible by comparison, a trifling peccadillo.

Nobody could deny David's skills as soldier and politician, but his later history as king tells a story of vacillation, weakness, incompetence, vindictiveness and so forth - a man unable to control his own palace and its inmates.

In practice few historians, or commentators on the books of Samuel, would go so far as all this.³ On some issues a majority of scholars would give David the benefit of the doubt, and on some others would be content to shrug, as when M. Noth, for instance, talks of "the not entirely unwarranted suspicion that David ... engineered the murder of Abner".⁴ None the less, the historian's estimate of David is inevitably coloured by at least some of these suspicions about his actions and his motives. In particular, most commentators take the view that he was responsible for butchering most of Saul's family. Not only does 2 Sam. 21 record that David issued the orders for their execution, but 2 Sam. 16:7f. goes further and offers us the description of him as "a man of blood", with particular reference to "the blood of the house of Saul".

While historical certainty is unattainable, and a case can still be made for justifying or at least excusing David in these various episodes in his career, one or two points can now be made. First, the material for a revised estimate of David's character comes quite naturally out of a consideration of the actual data contained in the books of Samuel, as I have just illustrated in the case of the

3. But see T. Ishida, The Royal Dynasties in Israel, 1977, pp. 55-63, for an unusually hostile assessment of David.

4. Cf. M. Noth, History of Israel² (1959), p. 185.

execution of Saul's family. Secondly, as soon as one restricts one's vision to the books of Samuel, a lower estimate of David becomes much more plausible. The Psalter may give an impression of David as a saintly man; the books of Samuel offer the reader a very human figure.

A factor contributing to the historian's view of David, I suspect, is the recognition that a fair amount of material in 1 Samuel, in particular, is plainly apologetic. In other words, the writer or writers of the block of material telling the story of David's rise to the throne knew only too well that some of David's early history was open to more than interpretation; and set out to defend it in order to improve his image. In our modern world of so much blatant propaganda, some of it utterly false and most of it based at best on half-truths, we tend to get cynical as soon as we get a whiff of apologetics: the tag "s'excuse, I accuse" tends to govern our response. We should, however, be aware of becoming too cynical in our handling of the data incorporated in the books of Samuel.

The Literary Approach to the Story of David

1) The Theological Mode

We turn from the realm of historical inquiry as such, which sought to establish what David actually said and did and to assess his motivation, to a rather different question, namely, how is David presented in the books of Samuel? And what did the author or authors seek to convey to the reader? There would be general agreement that the answers to such questions must be found within the framework of the purposes of the deuteronomists, who were responsible for the whole corpus of the Deuteronomic history, Judges - Kings.

One of the most detailed treatments of 2 Samuel from this point of view is that of R. A. Carlson.⁵ There had been a marked tendency in earlier literary-critical scholarship to treat the last four chapters of 2 Samuel

(chs. 21-24) as an appendix, almost a mere appendage, to the story of David, and so to ignore their relevance to the central chapters of the book, the so-called Court History of David. Carlson remedied this, emphasizing how thoroughly integrated the whole of 2 Samuel is. Our concern here is the presentation of David that results from a treatment like Carlson's. He sees the material as falling into two unequal halves, chapters 1-8⁶ and chapters 9-24 respectively, and he entitles these two segments as "David under the Blessing" and "David under the Curse" respectively. The deuteronomists, says Carlson, had a clear didactic purpose in this, to demonstrate how inexorably nemesis overtakes a king who wilfully departs from obedience to Yahweh. In Carlson's analysis, David emerges as accorded primarily a negative evaluation - the deuteronomists set out to be thoroughly critical of him. Nevertheless they did recognize that unlike so many of his successors "he never apostatized to the worship of strange gods" and "that he was faithful to Yahweh's Covenant".⁷

Thus we receive yet another assessment of David's character; and a question of some interest poses itself. How did early readers of the books of Samuel envisage the character of David? Did they see him as basically a saint and hero, whose occasional lapses served chiefly to throw his virtues into relief, and perhaps served also to show that he was human after all? Or did they bring to bear a somewhat detached and even cynical view of his activities? (After all, the ancients were well aware of the propensities of kings.) Or did they see him as the exemplar of a potentially great man who strayed from the straight and narrow and paid for it ever after?

Or the question might be posed differently: did the reader's judgement depend upon the estimate of David he brought to the material - his prejudice, if you like - or was his judgement formulated by the material in front of him? The latter possibility seems to constitute the basis of our final technique for analysing the books of Samuel, namely the non-theological literary approach.

6. In point of fact, Carlson excludes ch. 1 and ch. 8 from his analysis.

7. Ibid., p. 258.

The Non-theological Mode

A considerable number of authors have by now produced literary analyses of Old Testament narratives, bringing new techniques (new, at least, in the sphere of literary criticism) and eliciting new insights. More than one literary critic has handled sections of the story of David, but for present purposes it will suffice to concentrate on one, Peter D. Miscall, whose recent monograph The Kings of Biblical Narrative is largely concerned with 2 Sam. 16-22, the early history of David. Carlson did not concern himself with 1 Samuel, but perhaps one could legitimately extrapolate and suggest that the story of David's rise to the throne, in 1 Samuel, must be part of the depiction of "David under the Blessing".

If Carlson would so argue, it is abundantly clear that Miscall would not. He insists, on the basis of what literary specialists nowadays call "a close reading" of the narrative, that David is portrayed as a wholly ambiguous character from the very outset. Miscall was not of course the first scholar to notice the moral dubiousness of David's conduct at Nob and in Gath, in his deliberate defeat of first Ahimelech and then Achish, but he goes far beyond this observation. Even in 1 Sam. 17, the famous story of David and Goliath, it seems that David is not unequivocally presented as a pious and courageous youth, willing to risk all in the cause of Yahweh and Israel. It is just as possible to "read" him as an arrogant schemer or a gambler. David's brother Eliab, after all, was very critical of him, so the reader must take such a portrait cautiously. In fact, we are never told by the narrator which scenario (if either) is right.

And so Miscall continues, concluding in his "Afterscript" that a "determinate reading" of David must be impossible: the text offers no "specific portrayal" of David, and he suggests that any determinate portrait of David drawn by another scholar would have to be in defiance of the text.⁸ The text is ambiguous and is meant to be ambiguous. The David we meet in the Deuteronomistic History

Miscall, op. cit., pp. 140f.

is a man whose character defies any attempt at assessment. If so, then presumably it would be improper to draw any morals whatever from the story of David - though Miscall does not say so.

4. The Portrait of David

While these various modes of approach to the biblical story of David are very different, they may combine to leave us with the impression that the character of David is wholly elusive and beyond our recall; and of course this could be true as regards the historical David, depending on our view of the evidence. But is the story (putting aside the question of historicity) really so ambiguous as Miscall, in particular, insists? It is of course beyond doubt that David's career - in history or in story - was a checkered one, as even the most adulatory traditional view of him must admit. Even saints have their defects, and nobody would expect otherwise. So up to a point the portrayal of David as having his ups and downs, his virtues and his failings, is only true to life - plausible and credible. But it seems to me that Miscall's position is essentially very different from this: he seems to be equating at the literary level David's ups with his downs, his virtues with his failings. Thus not only David's character but the entire story of his career becomes ambiguous. Can this really be the biblical authors' intention?⁹

Against this position I would wish to make a number of points. In the first place, one must surely consider the total effect or impression of the story as a whole. Generations of readers have found David to be a sympathetic character, someone they could empathize with; indeed, it took the skills of modern scholarship to throw up a different and blacker view of him. Moreover, the very fact that later biblical tradition about David heightened his virtues and tended to ignore his failings and failures

9. I am not fully clear whether Miscall claims to be discussing literary intention or literary effect (possibly unintentional), but it seems to me the thrust of some of his argument demands the former as its basis.

shows that this was the general impression he had left behind him.

Secondly, it appears that Miscall's approach is predicated on the supposition that the first readers of the books of Samuel were a tabula rasa on which the biblical author could record any impression he chose. But in reality many traditions about David must have been current in Israel before the books of Samuel were read. Who did not know something of the story of David and Goliath, for instance? If so, David will already have been a folk-hero, and it is most unlikely that any early reader of 1 Sam. 17 will have taken Eliab's criticisms of David seriously. If the reader of today is to take those criticisms "seriously", Miscall insists we must, then they may reflect just as easily on the character of Eliab, as jealous, quarrelsome, untruthful - in any case, unfit to be king, as the previous chapter has already hinted.

Thirdly, it may be questioned whether the fact that the motives of David are rarely alluded to or hinted at implies that the biblical writers intended us to see them as ambiguous. This emphasis on action and word rather than thought and purpose is typical of Old Testament narrative style. If we were to apply Miscall's viewpoint in a thorough-going fashion, we should probably make every character in the Old Testament ambiguous, and it is scarcely credible that the biblical writers set out to convey that impression. Were there no heroes or villains? It would make more sense, surely, to look for clues and pointers in the narrative which would guide the reader as to how the author wished him to perceive the character on page. That is not to exclude the possibility that at times - with some episodes or some characters - the authors are quite happy to leave matters undefined and ambiguous; but we should be awake to such pointers as there may be. The further point needs consideration before examining some of the data: we must allow for the possibility of moral judgements on the part of the narrator which might differ from our own. This consideration is particularly relevant to the story of David's deceit of Achish (1 Sam. 29). Would an ancient Israelite reader have faulted

David for pulling the wool over the eyes of an enemy of Israel? More probably he would have admired his skill in thus manipulating Achish; indeed, the episode could suggest that David was destined to be a better king than Achish, more shrewd and skilful in handling men. Again, the total extermination of the Amalekites recorded in 1 Sam. 27 might seem barbaric to us, but scarcely so to an ancient Israelite. In passages such as these the narrator would scarcely have felt the need to supply a moral commentary, and certainly not an excuse for David's conduct.

We first encounter David in 1 Sam. 16, which recounts in some detail his anointing at the hands of Samuel. The narrative is at some pains to emphasize that David was Yahweh's choice, not Samuel's, and that Yahweh "looks on the heart". Miscall remarks that the narrative does not indicate what Yahweh saw in David's heart; but, however concisely, the point is adequately made that because of what Yahweh saw in David's character, he chose him to be Israel's next king, and bestowed his Spirit upon him. A few verses later, in the course of the next pericope, we are given a human evaluation of David, apparently on the lips of an objective witness, a member of Saul's entourage: David, he claimed, was not only a skilful musician (which the situation demanded) but - and in context this information is gratuitous - "a man of valour, a man of war, prudent in speech, and a man of good presence; and Yahweh is with him". Miscall's "close reading" does not overlook this verse (verse 18), to be sure; but by some alchemy which eludes my understanding, he makes it a less than positive evaluation of David. For Miscall, it already contains hints of David's affair with Bathsheba, for instance; but they are far from obvious.

Thus before David has said a word or performed a deed, the reader is given a frame of reference for him; and it is one, moreover, which accords with any preconceived portrait of David which the reader would have brought to the text.

Let us now move to the other end of the story of David as we find it in the books of Samuel. In the

intervening chapters, if we follow Carlson's schema, David's period of blessing has been overtaken by the era in which he was "under the curse". Does the story end, then, with an unhappy backward look at the man who started so promisingly? On the contrary, 2 Sam. 23 presents a glowing picture of David's royal role: he had ruled "justly" and "in the fear of God", and is likened to the beneficial sun and rain (vv. 3ff.). Carlson's schema is in fact too simplistic, too black-and-white; certainly many chapters of 2 Samuel describe the punishment David endured in the sequence of his sin, but the category "David under the curse" surely overstates it. David can be seen as overcoming his many troubles, and emerging a sadder, but wiser, man. Clearly the compiler of 2 Samuel saw nothing incongruous in placing the two psalms of chapters 22f., with their high view of David, at the end of the whole Bathsheba affair and its sequel.

As for Miscall's handling of David, he tends to neglect the other characters in the story; this not only makes the story of considerable human interest but also opens the way for some misinterpretation. To return to the Goliath story, where (as we noted) Miscall urges us to pay attention to David's brother's sharp criticisms of David. Are we simply to shrug and say, "Eliab could very well be right"? Rather we ought to ask, "What do we know about Eliab?" The narrator has already introduced him to the reader in the previous chapter as a deceptively attractive man who God has "rejected". He is then a man whom the attentive reader will instinctively distrust, however plausible he may appear. He had initially deceived Samuel but the reader is forewarned - and Miscall ought not to have been deceived either!

There is then considerable reason for challenging Miscall's treatment of David. The portrayal is not a sequence of completely ambiguous presentations, but rather a mixture of good deeds and bad which can be recognized as such. Why is it that the average reader tends to play down the bad deeds? The reason is not only one of general impressions and a positive evaluation in the framework of the story; quite consistently when David's acts appear in

a bad light, he is portrayed as expressing his penitence. Thus when he was indirectly responsible for the death of the priests of Nob, he is said to have faced up to the fact and admitted it, before making what small amends he could (1 Sam. 22:22f.). When he was only just deterred from butchering Nabal and his family, he pronounced a blessing on Abigail, who had averted his bloodthirsty vengeance (1 Sam. 25:32ff.). When he was rebuked by Nathan for his adultery and murder, he confessed simply and unequivocally "I have sinned against Yahweh" (2 Sam. 12:13). When his census brought about pestilence in Israel (as he believed), he again confessed his sin and moreover made intercession for his suffering people (2 Sam. 24:17).

It seems clear enough, then, that the compiler took a positive view of David's character, and so did the writer or writers who included or added these penitential touches here and there in the narrative. Was this in fact the compiler himself, transforming less favourable material by such touches? This would seem unlikely in all instances. For instance, David's confession after the slaughter at Nob is surely essential to the flow of the narrative; he is in conversation with Abiathar, a survivor of that massacre, and he could hardly pass over his own role in the affair in total silence. The very fact that Abiathar had gone to David for refuge is also a clear indication of the view that the narrator took of David. Similarly the Bathsheba narrative, which depicts Nathan as rebuking the king, must always have included some response by David.

It was not just an editor, then, gazing at David through rose-tinted spectacles, who represented him in a way that would attract the reader's sympathy and general approval. The narrators do so too. As noted above, the whole block of material in 1 Samuel concerned with David's rise to the throne is apologetic in character; it may be a fair deduction from this that in reality there was something to hide, or rather some things to be explained, but we should not overlook the fact that the narrator at any rate was on David's side. The early chapters of 2 Samuel are plainly written in some admiration of David's achievements, especially against the Philistines; no critic of

is at work here. The so-called Court History of David is another matter, and it may be that the author of these chapters was less well disposed towards the central figure than them. However, there is little consensus among scholars as to the precise purpose of these chapters, and it could not be confidently affirmed that they are hostile to David; conceivably they are hostile to the monarchy as such, but this is a different issue.¹⁰

My own reading of them accords closely with the interpretation offered by D. M. Gunn. Noting the roles played in the narratives by Shimei and Abishai, he argues that "David ... cannot accept the view of Abishai that payment and retribution is for man to take into his own hands. On the other hand ... he is not prepared to bow to hopeless determinism, as though once cursed he can hold no further hope of a life beyond that curse Thus David fully affirms Yahweh's authority and involvement but rejects the ready assumption that we know how that manifests itself He does not deny his own offence; rather he looks at the possibility that Yahweh in his graciousness might choose to dispense with a rigid connection between guilt and judgement." Gunn then concludes that "the story of King David ... affirms the presence of Yahweh and his involvement in human affairs ... and above all points to the radical generosity with which he can break the expected order of things. In this last respect we come close to understanding David himself. Perhaps, for our author, Yahweh is rather like David."¹¹ If so, "our author" is clearly not presenting David in a definitively bad light in this central core of the David narratives.

The remaining chapters of 2 Samuel, with 1 Kings 1f., are not wholly in David's favour, perhaps, but in the story of his execution of Saul's family we find again a strongly elogetic note: David had no option, we are told. In

For a brief discussion of the "Tendenz" of these chapters, cf. R. P. Gordon, 1 and 2 Samuel (1984), pp. 86f.

D. M. Gunn, The Story of King David (1978), pp. 109f. This discussion owes much to W. Brueggemann's study of 2 Sam. 16 in CBQ 36 (1974), pp. 175-192.

1 Kings 1f. the portrait is morally neutral, to my mind, probably because David is now a spent force, and the central figure is no longer David but Solomon.

At the literary level, then, I would argue that David's character may need rehabilitation. It should not be misinterpreted either because of historical insights or because of recent literary analyses. Indeed, the same portrait of David which was built up in Jewish and Christian tradition on the basis of the whole of the Old Testament data can be seen in embryo in 1 and 2 Samuel. The penitential note is struck, as we have seen; and his activity as a psalmist is incorporated in 2 Samuel 22f. The difference is not so much one of character as of texture. Again, David Gunn expresses the point neatly when he says that our story-teller "has a powerful, yet sympathetic, sense of the faulty of man, and this, I believe, sums up his treatment of David, the 'hero' of the story ... it remains the case that David is the one truly engaging character in the story."¹²

5. The Historical David

Is there any possibility of going back behind the literary David to assess the character of the historical David? Plainly there are difficulties and uncertainties; the major problem is that there is no extra-biblical evidence to serve as a control for our interpretations of the biblical material. However, few would dispute the basic facts of David's life and career; it is his motivation which is more open to dispute. One point in favour of the general historicity of the story told in 1 and 2 Samuel is that facts such as David's temporary friendship with a Philistine king, his involvement in the Nob massacre, his adultery with Bathsheba and murder of Uriah, are recorded. If so, there is little reason to adopt a cynical stance and accuse David of many more disreputable actions, such as overt rebellion against Saul, and treachery in all directions.

12. Ibid., p. 111

The major question is the extent to which we should accept the apologetics of some of the biblical narratives. For instance, are we to put all the blame on Saul's pathological jealousy for his breach with David, as 1 Samuel suggests, or was David secretly plotting against the king? Ultimately this question cannot be resolved, we can still reasonably point out that at any rate the books of Samuel, despite their drawing on several sources, present the reader with a consistent picture of David and also a consistent picture of Saul. There seems good reason to believe that David did on at least one occasion have the opportunity to kill Saul, and deliberately refrained. In fact, there are two such stories, in 1 Sam. 24 and 26; and R. P. Gordon neatly makes the point that whether there was originally one such incident or two, the two narratives constitute "a double affirmative of David's innocence", since the narrator must have inherited both stories.¹³

We can then proceed to deduce that if David went so far as to spare Saul's life on occasion, it is scarcely likely that he was in fact a rebel against him. It is certainly not implausible that Saul - whose monarchy rested on no very secure basis - had become fearful, suspicious and finally murderous towards a man of ability who was attracting such popular attention. Thus the broad general picture of David's rise is perfectly credible, and probably more credible than any alternative (and purely speculative) reconstruction of events.

Similarly there is good reason to think that Abner's death was a positive embarrassment to David; if David really did engineer the assassination, we would have to say that he timed it very badly, and it seems simpler to give him the benefit of the doubt.

An examination of other episodes again permits us to suppose that some modern interpretations may be over-enthusiastic of David. The phrase "protection racket" is very easy to apply to David's activities in southern Judah as described in 1 Sam. 25, but this modern analogy, smacking of what it does of the Mafia, rather overstates the case. It is

at any rate clear that David had sufficient friends in Judah for him to be chosen as their king, in preference to Saul's son and successor, on Saul's death in battle.

Ultimately, then, it seems likely that David's character was not much different from the one portrayed for us in 1 and 2 Samuel. We must be careful, however, to recognize both sides of the character who is portrayed there. He is certainly no plaster saint. Indeed, one good reason for taking the portrait in Samuel seriously is that David appears there as a rounded and complex character - a normal human being, in fact, though plainly a talented leader of men. If ecclesiastical traditions have been prone to turn him into something super-human, that is because they have neglected or toned down the evidence of the books of Samuel.¹⁴

14. See Gordon's monograph for a comprehensive and up-to-date bibliography on the books of Samuel.

Κλησις - Call and Calling

Kevin Condon

The Greek word κλησις is not an obscure or difficult word. No resounding controversies have arisen in connection with it. Apart from one particular text (1 Cor 7.20; cf. 1.26), its meaning throughout the NT is quite clear: God's call to salvation. Nevertheless, ever since the Reformation there have been two distinct tendencies in regard to its translation. Catholics use the word 'vocation', and mean a vocation to the religious life (though with less emphasis now than formerly). Protestants use the word 'calling' and think more in terms of one's calling in the world. This is especially true of the highly coloured German word Beruf, with its Lutheran overtones. The difference is subtle, but of no small consequence. Here we shall examine the NT from the standpoint of these two divergent positions.

Firstly, as regards antecedents in the OT, there is no word in the Hebrew that corresponds exactly to the Greek κλησις. But this is not surprising, since the verbal nouns or abstracts are not very common in the Hebrew anyway. /1 What is more surprising is the the verb qara (καλέω) occurs but rarely in a religious sense, and this solely within Second Isaiah. Where one would expect to find it - in the call of a prophet - one does not find it. In almost all cases the call to the prophet comes through an oracle, a 'word of Yahweh', which proclaims what the mission of the prophet is to be. /2

But in Second Isaiah one finds texts such as the following:

41.9: "You whom I took from the ends of the earth; and called from its furthest corners, saying to you, "You are my servant (LXX πᾶς) I have chosen you (ἐξελεξάμην) and not cast you off."

- 42.6: (the servant): 'I have called you in righteousness, I have given you as a covenant to the peoples, a light to the nations.'
- 48.12: 'Hearken to me, O Jacob, Israel whom I called.'
- 48.15: ἐγὼ ἐλάλησα, ἐγὼ ἐκάλεσα ('I have spoken, I have called')
- 50.2: ἐκάλεσα καὶ οὐκ ἦν ὁ ὑπακούων (אֵין תָּשָׁע: 'no one to answer'; Greek 'no one to obey'- the true response to the call is 'obedience' ὑπακοή)

We find also an emphasis on the idea of naming:

- 43.1: ἐκάλεσά σε τὸ ὄνομα' σου, ἐμός εἰ σὺ ('I have called you by name; you are mine')
- 45.3 ἐγὼ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ καλῶν τὸ ὄνομα σου, θεὸς Ἰσραὴλ: 'It is I, the Lord God, the God of Israel who call you by your name' /3

All in all, the call is to Israel. And the effect of this 'call' or 'naming' is that Israel has been 'chosen', has become 'God's people.' This election is frequently traced back to the call of Abraham eg in Deuteronomy 7.7f we read:

"It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples."

or again:

"You only have I known among all the families of the earth; therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." (Amos 3.2; cf. Psalm 80.16; Isaiah 41.8; 44.1f; 48.12. In Isa 48.12 we have the form 'My called one': מִיִּשְׁמִי)

Coming to the NT one finds that κλησις is above all a Pauline or post-Pauline technical term. For, although καλέω is often used in the gospels in a 'neutral' sense viz 'to summon'. 'to invite', 'to name', it has a religious meaning only in such texts as, 'I have not come to call the righteous but sinners (Mark 2.17 and pars.) or the 'calling' of the disciples (Mark 1.10

and par.). Also, perhaps, in the parable of the invitation to the feast where the κεκλήμενοι anticipates the people hinted at in the parable: those who are invited to share in the Kingdom of God. In St. John's gospel the words καλέω/κλησις (call/calling) do not occur in a religious sense; nonetheless the idea of 'calling' (and separation) is quite pronounced (cf. Jn 1.43; 13.36f; 21.19; 6.66ff; 12.32; 14.3,6; 15.1-10, 16-19; 17.14ff)

But in the Pauline epistolary the two words are frequently used in a deeply religious sense. Thus καλέω in a very explicit way in Rom 8.30:

"Those whom he predestined he also called;
and those whom he called he also justified;
and those whom he justified he also glorified",

where the three verbs, προορίζω (predestine), δικαιώω (justify) and δοξάζω (glorify) give us a distinct colouring to the idea of "calling". It includes the whole process of salvation. Elsewhere, God (or Christ) is the "one who calls" (Rom 9.12; Gal.5.8); he has "called" the descendants of Abraham in Isaac (Rom 9.7); he has "called" both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 9.24); he has "called" into fellowship with his Son (1 Cor 1.9); He "calls" in peace (1 Cor 7.17); he "calls" by the grace of Jesus Christ (Gal 1.16; cf.1.15); he "calls" to freedom (5.13). Each should walk as he has been "called" by the Lord (1 Cor 7.18 et alia). "Calling" (klēsis) occurs in Rom 11.29: "The gifts (charismata) and the call (klēsis) of God are irrevocable," where "call" (klēsis) seems to have more the meaning of "election". Also 1 Cor 1.26 ("look at your calling, brethren") and 1 Cor 7.20 ("Let each remain in the call (or calling?) wherein he was called.") Here it is debated whether klēsis means "state of call", or "estate", "condition of life" (see below). Finally, Phil 3.14, "the reward of the heavenly (anō, lit "up") calling". Thus already in the earlier epistles of Paul one finds the oscillation of meaning between God's (initial) call and, in the individual, his "calling", his state of being called.

This distinction appears to gain ground in the later epistles, where the sense of "calling" is made all the stronger by the introduction of a sacral terminology. Thus 1 Thess 2.12: "he called us into his own kingdom and glory"; but, on the other hand, 4.7: "not in impurity but in sanctification". Likewise 2 Thess 2.13: "God chose you to be saved in sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth to which he also called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." So too, 2 Tim 1.9: "He saved us and called us with a holy call (klēsis) (God's call, or our calling?); Hebrews 9.19: the Christians who are said to be the κεκλήμενοι to an eternal inheritance are in 3.1 the κλήσεως ἐπουρανίου μέτοχοι (sharers in God's call, or sharers in a divine calling?) Other verses that share the same ambiguity include: "that God may make you worthy of the call (klēsis)" (2 Tim 1.11); "Strive to make firm your klēsis and your election" (2 Peter 1.10). The "call" comes from God; the "calling" works itself out, and this in terms of "sanctification" (ἁγιάσμος).

The sacral terminology is particularly striking in the expression κλητοὶ ἅγιοι (lit. "called saints"). In Rom 1.6 the "klētoi of Jesus Christ" are in the following verse klētoi hagioi ("called (to be) saints"). (In 8.28 οἱ κατὰ πρόθεσιν κλητοὶ, "the called according to his purpose"). The klētoi hagioi are those who have been sanctified (ἁγιάσμενοι) in Christ Jesus (1 Cor 1.2)

At Gal 1.15 one reads: "But when he who had set me apart (aphorisas) before I was born and called (kalesas) me through his grace....". The religious idea of "setting apart" is here closely related with the idea of "calling"; that which is "set apart" is (to the religious mind) "hallowed", "consecrated". On two occasions Paul uses of himself the expression klētos apostolos (Rom 1.1; 1 Cor 1.1). Even grammatically it cannot mean "called to be an apostle" as the RSV translates it. It means "called as an apostle," /6 and the religious connotation "set apart", "hallowed", "consecrated" cannot be entirely excluded. /7

Thus, briefly, klēsis in the Pauline epistles is, on the one hand, God's "call" to salvation. (So too in the OT; but in the NT the outlook is more transcendent: the end is "eternal life", the "glory of Jesus Christ," the kingdom of God.). On the other hand, the fact that a terminology of religion is used, that the klēsis is anō (upward) and "heavenly" (epouranios) and especially hagia (holy), and that the goal is "sanctification" (hagiasmos) shows that there is a question not of God's call only but of the individual's "calling", and this in a very religious sense. He is called to "holiness".

There are, however, two passages in which the word might well have the meaning not of one's "divine call" but of "one's condition in the world." 1. "You see your calling (klēsis), brethren, that..." (1 Cor 1.26) 2. "Let each one remain in the calling (klēsis) in which he has been called (eklēthe)." (1 Cor 7.20) Debate centres mainly on the second. In 1931 Hans Lietzmann wrote in his commentary on 1 Corinthians: "klēsis here, as is clear from the context and from v24 ('Let each abide (by that) in which he was called') means the condition of being circumcised or not. Therefore something like Stand, or "state" as in our word Beruf. There are no parallels to this usage." /8

Subsequently Karl Ludwig Schmidt, in his article on κλησις in the TDNT, was critical of Lietzmann for introducing into his exposition of a NT word an understanding which was specifically Lutheran, weighted with theology. In all other cases, he writes, the word κλησις means "call"; therefore it must mean the same here. (He translates it "(state of) call"). So too Preuschen-Bauer, who consider it "daring" of Lietzmann to introduce a new interpretation of the text for which there are no parallels. /9

But then Bauer himself (the editor of Preuschen-Bauer) does come up with parallels from Greek sources. He quotes Libanius, a writer of the fourth century AD: τὴν τοῦ μαχαίροποιοῦ κλησὶν ἔλαβεν - "he took up the job of swordmaker"; and also Philo (Legat.ad Gaium, 163): a god's calling (θεοῦ κλησις) (ie the position or status of a god is so sacred to the Alexandrians that

they allow animals to share in it.) Bauer therefore translates klēsis in 7.20 as "station in life", "position", "vocation." (Beruf). /10

So far as Paul's argument is concerned, it makes little difference whether one translates the word as "(state of) call", or "calling". The difference in the context is not that great anyway. But it does make a difference if one introduces the German word Beruf (or "calling" in the sense of Beruf). For Beruf, to the German mind, means not simply "one's calling in the world" but one's God-given calling in the world; and this is certainly not what Paul is talking about. This very nuanced understanding of Beruf has arisen not exactly by design, for Luther himself used it at 7.20 but understood it to mean Stand or "state"; /11 it arose rather from Luther's adoption of the word Beruf elsewhere, in his translation of Sir 11.20: "Beharre bei deinem Beruf" ("Be faithful to your (God-given) calling.") This new and very characteristic Lutheran understanding of Beruf has influenced the use of the word throughout the whole of German culture, and possibly has had a profound effect upon the German mind. And this is so not because of any carefully formulated theological thesis but solely through the genius of a Bible translator, Martin Luther, who introduced his own spirit rather than followed the spirit of the original.

This thesis is proposed by Max Weber in his well-known book "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", in a brilliant analysis of the background and history of the idea of "call" and "calling". /13 He observes that the term Beruf (to which corresponds in the English Protestant world the term "calling", though it is probably not so weighted as Beruf) still retains, even in our secularized society, a profoundly religious colouring. The idea of a God-given calling in the world has no analogy previously in any other language.

Neither in the Greek or Latin, nor in the Latin-derived languages, nor even in the Bible, is there any word with the precise religious connotation of the German Beruf. In the Greek one can think of τὰ προσήκοντα ("Things that are one's concern, one's business"), but it is colourless; in the Latin, of opus (work) or officium (duty), or munus (office, function); but these are "neutral" words for "work"

or "duty". On one occasion, in Seneca (de benef., IV), the words officium comes near to meaning Beruf; Cicero can use the word profiteor or professio (cf "non intelligit quid profiteatur": "he does not understand what his business (or profession) is") with a certain nuance of spiritual duty, as in Beruf. But neither has any religious overtone.

On the other hand, there is no word in the Latin-derived languages corresponding to the German Beruf. In the Vulgate klēsis is always translated vocatio (ie the divine call) but never do the derivatives, such as the Italian vocazione, or chiamamento, mean objectively man's life-calling. (The nearest would be the Spanish vocacion). Whereas, on the other hand, such words as do connote one's profession in the world, the Latin magisterium, or officium (and the derivatives) or the Italian impiego, have no religious connotation whatsoever.

Not only that but the word Beruf (English, calling; Dutch, Beroep; Danish, Kald; Swedish, kallelse) is never used in any pre-Reformation translation of the Bible with the nuanced meaning of a God-given assignment in the world. /14 All the translations influenced by the Reformation have it; whereas all those not so influenced do not have it. /15

Where then do we first find trace of this innovative nuance? Did Luther set out from the start to give to the world this new meaning? Hardly. He always translates klēsis as Beruf; and he was well aware that it meant the divine call, and has nothing to do with worldly callings. Even in 1 Cor 7.20, where he might have introduced something of his own theology, he does not do so; for he interprets his word Beruf here as meaning Stand (ie state or condition of life; cf Erlangen edition of Luther's works, Vol LI p51) /15 At the same time, 1 Cor 7.20 gives him a starting point for a new understanding of the Greek klēsis, and this he presents unequivocally in his (later) translation of the apocryphal Ben Sirach, at 11.20:

στῆθι ἐν διαθήκῃ καὶ ὁμίλει ἐν αὐτῇ
καὶ ἐν τῷ ἔργῳ σοῦ παλαιώθητι

μὴ θαύμαζε ἐν ἔργοις ἁμαρτωλοῦ
πίστευε δὲ Κυρίῳ καὶ ἔμμενε τῷ πόνῳ σου

Luther's translation is:

Bleibe bei den was dir anvertraut ist, und
Ube dich darin, und halte aus in deinem Beruf,
und lass dich nicht davon beirren, wie die
Gottlosen zu Geld kommen, sondern vertraue
du Gott und bleibe in deinem Beruf

(Cf RSV

Stand by your covenant and attend to it,
and grow old in your work.
Do not wonder at the works of a sinner,
But trust in the Lord and keep at your toil.)

The first word of the Greek passage διαθήκη Luther transliterates. He had no way of knowing that the Hebrew original was hoq. /16 Had he known this he might well have translated διαθήκη as Beruf, for hoq stands for anything that is established and ordained by divine decree.

His choice of Beruf for ἔργον(mela'kah) (work) is not wide of the mark, if one discount the theological nuance. For mela'kah, coming from a root la'ak, contains the notion of a sending or a mission; whence, work (Cf Prov 22.29: In suo opere diligens (or, as 18.9 negligens) ie diligent in your work (or negligent). In these texts of Proverbs, Luther had already translated mela'kah as Geschäft). It means especially such "work" as that of the king's ministers (1 Chron 29.6); or the temple servants (Nehemiah 11.16, et al.); or the Levites (the 'anse mela'kah: 1 Chron 25.1)

At the second point where he uses the word Beruf the Greek has ΠΟΝΟΣ. But here the text is corrupt, and Beruf is a deliberate but rather arbitrary choice. /17 In both instances the meaning that emerges is: "Be faithful to your God-given calling in the world", which is surely not intended by Sirach. From this time on the nuanced Lutheran notion of Beruf became established in the cultural life of Germany and had its influence on all other translations of the Bible.

Weber observes that it was just about this time, when

Luther was translating the Apocrypha (ca 1530) that the question of the evaluation of man's work in the world began to be discussed. He writes:

"In the meantime (or about the same time), in the Augsburg Confession, the Protestant dogma of the inavailability of the Catholic attempt to excel worldly morality was established, and in it the expression "einem jeglichen nach seinem Beruf" ("To each one according to his calling") was used. In Luther's translation, both this and the positive valuation of the order in which the individual was placed, as holy, which was gaining ground just about the beginning of the 1530s, stand out. It was a result of his more and more sharply defined belief in a special Divine Providence, even in the details of life, and at the same time of his increasing inclination to accept the existing order of things in the world as immutably willed by God. Vocatio in the traditional Latin meant the divine call to a life of holiness, especially in a monastery, or as a priest. But now, under the influence of this dogma, life in a worldly calling came for Luther to have the same connotation. For he now translated ἔργον and πόνος in Jesus Sirach with Beruf, for which, up to that time there had only been a Latin analogy, coming from the monastic tradition. But a few years earlier, in Prov.xxii.29, he had still translated the Hebrew m^ela'kah (as in other passages: Gen xxxix.11) with Geschäft (Septuagint ἔργον, Vulgate opus, English "business", and correspondingly in the Scandinavian and all the other translations before me)."

Weber's thesis is an essay in sociology, an attempt to show the "paradox of unintended consequences" and how new ideas (especially in the realm of religion) can go awry and lead to results unintended by their original proponents. The concept of Beruf, once the religious aspect had ceased to dominate, led not a little to the professionalism and bureaucracy of the modern world. His analysis is brilliant, but one can hardly say that he has demonstrated his case. At the same time, in the light of his other studies on religion, it merits consideration;

for the general conclusion is that radical rationalisations (of religion) lead with the inevitability of fate to irrational results. If this is true, one wonders what results will emerge for society from the deliberations of the Second Vatican Council!

Notes

1. Correspondingly with the Hebrew, the LXX does not use the word klēsis in a religious sense. Mostly it means "invitation" (to feasts etc).
2. Occasionally laqah is used of God's "taking" the prophet (eg Amos 7.15); more often salah of God's "sending" him (Judges 6.8; 2Sam 12.1; Isaiah 6.8; 42.19; 48.16; 61.1; Jer 25.4; 28.15; Ezek 13.6; Mal 3.1, 23)
3. In the Targums the "naming the name" (qara' (be) sem) is consistently changed to rabbi (be) sum, in the sense of exaltation, "glorifying the name" (TDNT III 490, n.6)
4. How this "call" or election worked itself out in the life of the individual Israelite is a question that may be asked. One naturally thinks of the individual's faith and his loyalty to the covenant. But one cannot rule out a feature that is common to all religions - viz., the dialectic of the "holy" - any more than one can rule it out from the NT, or late Judaism. "You shall be holy, as I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev 18.2 et al.) is a call with a fundamentally religious basis which presupposes a meaningful understanding of such terms as "holy", "unholy", "set apart", "calling", "consecrated," etc
5. klētoi hagioi is strikingly reminiscent of the mysterious miqra' qodes that one meets in Ex 12.16, in Lev 23 (passim) and in Num 28 and 29 (passim). (In Isaiah 1.13 and 4.5 the word miqra occurs without qodes)
Exodus 12.16 reads as follows in the RSV: "On the

first day you shall hold a holy assembly (migra'qodes) and on the seventh day a holy assembly (do.); no work shall be done on those days; but what everyone must eat, that only may be prepared for you." The usual modern translation for migra'qodes is, in fact, "holy assembly" or "convocation". And yet, it is by no means a certain translation. It is curious, for instance, to find the prohibition of work linked with the "holy assembly". The link would make much better sense if, instead of "holy assembly" one were to understand migra'qodes as a "declaration of holiness". For this is how the LXX appears to have understood it: in the first instance (Ex 12.16 above), klēthēsetai hagia (it shall be called holy), and in the second instance, klētē hagia estai humin (it shall be called holy by you). (The Targum, admittedly, reads 'irua'qaddis (plural. 'eru^cin qaddisⁿ) and the meaning is "holy convocation(s)". (So Jastrow). Nonetheless, as in the Hebrew migra', so too there is an ambiguity here. In the Aramaic there is a double root 'arā', one of which means to "meet", "to join", and the other "to declare".

The idea of the "holy", of "sanctifying" or "setting apart" holy vessels, of "proclaiming the holiness" of certain days or seasons is commonplace in Rabbinic Judaism (cf Jastrow, Dictionary, s.v. qadas:piel). The noun qeduṣṣah means "the declaration of the sanctity of the day or the occasion, in prayer or at meals;" the qeduṣṣah 'al hak-kos means the "proclamation of the sanctity of the day over a cup (of wine)". Jastrow, s.v.

6. So Bauer (Arndt-Gingrich). s.v.

7. The religious context is unmistakable. Therefore to exclude the idea of "separation" or "consecration" and with it the dialectical notion of the "holy" is to miss out on a very important element in Paul's outlook.

Examples from hellenistic circles are rare: one comes from the Metamorphoses of Apuleios - "the priest (of Isis) who is keklēmenos (called: ie in order to do certain things)"; another from Pausanias

(X,32,13) - again speaking of the initiates of the Isis cult: "there is no access to the sanctuary for any others except those whom Isis herself has previously honoured and called through dreams (visions)."

TDNT, III, 490

8. Hans Lietzmann, An die Korinther, I/II,⁵1969, p32
9. E. Preuschen, Griechisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch, Ed. W. Bauer, 1958, s.v.
Zorell in his NT Lexicon translates: "in eo vitae genere in quo (ad fidem Christianam) vocatus estforte etiam 1 Cor 1.26 huc revocari potest" (in that kind of life in which one is called (to Christian faith,.....perhaps 1 Cor 1.26 may also be recalled here). He refers to an etymology from Dion of Halicarnassus (Ant.Rom.IV,18,2): "There were six divisions, which the Romans call classes, naming them after the Greek klēsis." But the best authorities regard Dion's etymology as an invention of his own. (TDNT, III,493,n.6)
10. W. Bauer /Arndt-Gingrich/, s.v.
11. Erlangen edition, IV,158
12. In the Augsburg Confession the Lutheran idea of Beruf is only implicit and but partially developed. In Art XVI, the expression "Jeder nach seinem Beruf" (each one to his calling) only occurs in German and is not in the Latin, from which the official English translation was made. Other articles (XXVI and XXVII) mention the word "calling" or Beruf only in a passing way.
13. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, tr. by Talcott Parsons, London 1930. The book was first published in 1905 and re-published in an expanded edition in 1920.

According to the OED the word "calling" means position, estate, or station in life. "Founded on 1 Cor 7.20...where it stands for the condition or position in which one was when called to salvation; but afterwards often mixed up with the

(previous) sense (viz, summons, invitation, or impulse of God to salvation or to his service)

1382 Wyclif: Eche man in what clepyng he was cleped, in that dwelle he.

1534 Tindale: in the same state wherein he was called.

1539 Cranmer: in the same callinge wherin he was called.

1582 Rheims: in the vocation that he was called.

1555 A sermon of Latimer: We are commanded...to apply ourselves to goodness, each one in his calling (Jeder nach seinem Beruf)

14. In pre-Reformation German translations klēsis is rendered either as Ruf, or Berufung, or Ruffunge; the verb as "Von Gott geruffet," or "gefordert." It is maintained by some that Luther was influenced by the German mystic Tauler, who wrote: "(peasants) follow their Ruf better than the geistliche Menschen (spiritual men) die auf ihrem Ruf Acht nicht haben (who have no regard for their calling)

15. Some German Catholic bibles do have the word Beruf, following Luther; but the Lutheran sense would not prevail in the Catholic mind

16. בְּנֵי עֹמֶר [בְּחֻקָּה וְכו'] וּבְמִלֻּחָה הַתִּשְׁשִׁין
אֶל־תַּתְמָה [בְּפִעְלֵי אֶן] הָאֵמֶן לִי וְקֹה לְאוֹרִי:

The spelling of hoq is defective, which is frequent in the Hebrew text of Sirach. diathēkē which can mean any form of established or statutory law or order (Quell, in TDNT II, 107), is used some ten times to translate hoq in the book of Sirach. (Zorell: hoq equals "pensum laboris" ie the duty of work)

17. Hebrew wēqawweh le'oro: "And hope for his light" ie illumination, guidance, salvation. What text lies behind the Greek version, it is not easy to determine.

The Vulgate text reads:

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Sta in testamento tuo, et in illo colloquere

Et in opere mandatorum tuorum veterasce

Ne manseris in operibus peccatorum;

Confide autem in Deo, et mane in loco tuo

(English translation:

Stand by your covenant, and talk about it(?)

And grow old as you do the work entrusted to you

Cut yourself off from the deeds of sinful men

But trust in God and hold on to your vocation)

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THE SON SPIRIT RELATIONSHIP -

Modern Reductions and New Testament Patterns

Thomas A Smail

To understand the person of the Holy Spirit has always been something of a problem for Christian theology, not least because the question can be raised in two different senses which are sometimes confused with each other. On the one hand we may ask whether the action of the Spirit has a personal character, whether it is the action of a personal God, who speaks, leads, rebukes, restrains empowers and so on. In that sense the question is easy to answer with a whole host of New Testament quotations that give a firm foundation for an affirmative response. On the other hand we may ask a more subtle question: in order to do justice to the role of the Holy Spirit do we have to recognise him as a distinct person, hypostasis, source of personal action, alongside the Father and the Son? There the word person is used in a specifically trinitarian sense and it is that question, rather than the other, which I wish to take up in this article. What evidence is there of a personal distinctiveness about the work of the Spirit so that we have to distinguish him from the Father and the Son? Does he interact in a personal way with the Father and the Son and is that interaction constitutive for the way we understand him? Is the Spirit just an extension of the divine personality, like the word and wisdom of God in the Old Testament, or does he stand over against the Father and Son as person in his own right? In order to take account of the way the New Testament understands the Spirit do we need a fully trinitarian as against a unitarian or binitarian doctrine of God?

For the limited purposes of this article I want to ignore the Father-Spirit relation that would have to be discussed in any full treatment of a trinitarian understanding of the Spirit, and to concentrate instead on the most difficult and obscure area by asking whether the New Testament treatment of the Spirit requires us to recognise a two way personal interaction and therefore a hypostatic distinction between the Spirit and the Son. I am of course aware that the term person or hypostasis in this trinitarian context raises a whole host of extremely complicated and difficult questions, but perhaps for the purposes of this article I may be allowed to dodge these and give what is little more than an ostensive definition of hypostasis as 'source and centre of personal action'. That begs all the questions but in a common sense kind of way we know roughly what it means and it may for the moment serve our purposes quite satisfactorily.

In contemporary theology there are three proposals for the understanding of the Son-Spirit relationship in the New Testament, two of which are reductionist in the most literal sense of that term, in that they propose to reduce the two terms in our relationship, Son-Spirit, to one, whereas the third proposal is again in the most basic sense conservative in that it proposes to retain the two terms Son and Spirit in their irreducible integrity and entirety.

Proposal 1: is that the Son is to be understood without remainder in terms of the Spirit, that Christ-language can be translated without loss into Spirit-language.

Proposal 2: in contrast moves in the opposite direction, by suggesting that the Spirit is to be understood without remainder in terms of the Son, that Spirit-language can be reduced to Christ language.

Proposal 3: is the traditional and trinitarian one that insists that Son and Spirit, although sharing the same divine being, are to be personally distinguished from each other so that they interact with each other in a way that compels us to recognise both as distinct centres of divine life and activity.

The position within the New Testament itself is sufficiently fluid to provide, at least prima facie, a basis for all these proposals and our purpose is to ask which can most adequately deal with the main thrust of the New Testament evidence and the pattern of divine-human relations that it implies. But to begin with we need to outline the two more radical and modern proposals a little more fully.

1. That Son-language can be translated without loss into Spirit-language

Those who hold this view maintain that in Christ we have to do not with the divine hypostasis of the eternal Son made flesh, but only with a man possessed and indwelt by the Spirit of God to a unique degree. This is the position to which the late G.W.H. Lampe gave classical expression in God as Spirit. Such an approach removes any need to reckon with God the Son as a distinct hypostasis in the Godhead and so declares that the question of the hypostatic relation of Son and Spirit as understood in the context of a Trinitarian theology is a bogus problem. The only real question is about how the particular immanence of the Spirit in Jesus of Nazareth is related to the general immanence

of the same Spirit in all other men and in the natural world as a whole. And since, for Lampe, Spirit is a mode, or, better the mode of God's presence and activity in the world, there is no question of any hypostatic relation of Spirit and Father, but only a question about the relationship of God's transcendence to his immanence. The old fashioned unitarianism of the distant God outside and remote from the world has in effect been replaced by a much more dynamic and evolutionary unitarianism of the Spirit where the emphasis is upon God's presence in and interaction with the world. But unitarianism it undoubtedly is, because when, as in Lampe, the Son as divine hypostasis is removed Father and Spirit collapse into each other and our trinitarianism into unitarianism.

At the centre of Lampe's reconstruction therefore is the assertion that Christ is to be understood exhaustively in terms of Spirit:

We should recognise, not that we experience the presence of Christ through the Spirit, but rather that when we speak of the presence of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit, we are speaking of one and the same experience of God: God as Spirit, who was revealed to men ... at a definite point in the history of man's creation in Jesus Christ ... We may if we wish call this contemporary, indwelling divine presence Christ... Yet this Christ is none other than the Spirit. The single reality for which these two terms stand is the one God in his relation to human persons.

(G.W.H.Lampe, God as Spirit (1978), 117-8)

If, as Lampe goes on to argue, we insist on affirming a pre- and post-existent divine Christ, we nudge the Holy Spirit into a secondary and ill-defined place as subsidiary mediator between God and men and, as a result we impose upon Christian experience a complication which it does not require.

This does not correspond with Christian experience which is not an experience of Christ being presented to us by or through another divine agency but a simple experience which can be described interchangeably in 'Christ' terms or 'Spirit' terms. The attempted distinction is artificial. It leaves us with an insoluble problem of trying to translate it into a real distinction, whether functional or ontological

between 'Christ' and 'Spirit': the 'Christ' who is made present to us, and the 'Spirit' through whom his presence is supposed to be mediated. (ibid. 117)

Such a statement raises all sorts of fascinating questions which we cannot stop to explore here about how the shape of our theology is related to the shape of our experience. We should however note that Lampe recognises that the New Testament writers, notably Paul and John, will not go all the way with him in his proposed conflation of Christ-experience and Spirit-experience, but that is because they have lumbered themselves with the doctrines of Christ's pre- and post-existence which, according to him, their Christian experience did not at its heart require. Lampe leaves us with the question whether such a twofoldness of Son and Spirit is an alien imposition upon Christian experience or the explication of something that is inherent in it and essential to it.

2. Before, however, we take up that question we should look at our second proposal which points in precisely the opposite direction. It has in common with the first an attempted reduction of the initial duality of Christ and Spirit, but differs from it in that it proposes to reinterpret Spirit-language in terms of Christ-language rather than the other way round. Here we are invited to see the Spirit as a mode of the presence and action of Christ rather than Christ as a mode of the presence and action of the Spirit. One representative of this view is Hendrikus Berkhof. On the one hand Berkhof in The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit is very positive about the contribution of Pentecostalism in emphasising that God works in the Church not just to justify and sanctify his people but also to empower them with gifts for mission, but, on the other hand, he wants to understand that empowering not as an independent work of the Holy Spirit but as that which, with justification and sanctification has its source in the risen Christ. Berkhof quotes Kasemann with approval as saying, 'The Spirit is the earthly presence of the exalted Lord. To say it more properly, in the Spirit the resurrected one is manifested in his resurrection power' to which Berkhof adds,

The Spirit is the new way of existence and action by Jesus Christ. Through his resurrection he becomes a person in action, continuing and making effective on a world-wide scale what he began in his earthly life.

(H. Berkhof, The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit (1965) 26-27).

Berkhof will have nothing to do with the traditional hypostatic differentiation of the Spirit from Christ,

This position is untenable ... if we face the fact that the Spirit in Scriptures is not an autonomous substance, but a predicate to the substance God and to the substance Christ. It describes the fact and the way of functioning of both' (ibid. 28).

We cannot quite say that 'the spirit is merely another name for the exalted Christ' since Christ transcends his activity towards us.

The risen Lord transcends his own functioning as life-giving Spirit. He is eternally in the glory of the Father as the first fruits of mankind, as the guarantee of our future, as the advocate of his Church. His life ... is more than his function toward us. At the same time, however, we must say that the word 'function' is too weak in this context. Christ's movement towards us is not a mere action but his entrance into us in a special modus existendi, the mode of immanence, in which he nevertheless does not cease to remain transcendent as the exalted Lord (ibid 28-9).

Here, as in Lampe, Spirit denotes a mode of immanence, this time not the general immanence of God, but the particular immanence of the exalted Christ in his Church. The traditional distinction between Christ and Spirit becomes, on this view, a distinction between the transcendence and immanence of the same Christ.

C.F.D. Moule is similarly inclined to a modalistic rather than a hypostatic view of the Spirit.

When Spirit is the mode of God's presence in the hearts and minds of his people, then there is a good case for personal language. But this still does not forced upon us a third eternal person (in the technical sense) within the Unity. (C.F.D.Moule The Holy Spirit (1978) 50).

He does distinguish the mode of God's presence in Christ as Mediator from the mode of his presence among Christians, interpreting Christ and creating his likeness in believers, but he is hesitant about affirming the threefoldness of God that a hypostatic understanding of

this distinction would imply, 'Threefoldness is perhaps less vital to a Christian conception of God than the eternal twofoldness of Father and Son' (ibid. 51).

This last sentence clearly differentiates Moule and at least the earlier Berkhof from Lampe. They are not unitarian but binitarian; at the heart of the Gospel is the 'eternal twofoldness' of Father and Son, but they hesitate to take the first step that would recognise the Spirit as having his own hypostasis over against Christ, rather than being reduced to a mode of Christ's activity. Nor is this position as idiosyncratic and modern as that of Lampe. Eastern Orthodox theologians such as Vladimir Lossky have always alleged that Western theology is, except in the most formal sense, binitarian rather than trinitarian, because it has never been able to understand the Spirit other than as a relationship between Christ and his Father and Christ and his people. It helps to make their case that Berkhof can quote a theologian for whom Trinitarianism was formally central in support of his own binitarian position, namely Karl Barth, to the effect that the Spirit is

no other than the presence and action of Jesus Christ himself: his stretched out arm; he himself in the power of his resurrection, i.e. in the power of his revelation as it begins in and with the power of his resurrection and continues from this point.

(Berkhof op.cit. 29, Barth, Church Dogmatics IV.2. 360-361 E.T.)

Here again Spirit is on the way for becoming simply a way of describing how Christ acts in the Church post-resurrection. The Western trinitarianism that with Augustine can see the Spirit as the nexus amoris within the life of God, a relationship between persons rather than himself person, finds it easy on the economic level to reduce the Spirit to a nexus between the person of Christ and the persons of his people. Against this the East has always protested and continues to do so. There the Spirit, while being homousios with the son in the sense of sharing the same divine being and nature is hypostatically distinct from him and with his own complementary and distinctive work to fulfill. Eastern theologians maintain that, far from being an abstruse point of theology, this modalistic understanding of the Spirit in the West has dire practical consequences in the life of the Church and in the practice of the Christian life.

The question that we have to ask therefore is whether there are good biblical and systematic reasons for resisting both of these forms of anti-trinitarian reductionism, either by following Lampe in making Christ the archetypal expression of the Spirit or, with Berkhof and Moule, by making the Spirit the means by which Christ expresses himself in the Church after his resurrection. Does the New Testament witness at important points resist these reductions and has it good reason for doing so? We shall address ourselves first to the question as to whether the New Testament pattern is comfortable to the less radical but more seductive and seemingly harmless proposal of Berkhof, and then go on to do the same for the revolutionary thesis of Lampe.

It is not of course hard to point to passages in the New Testament writings that point to precisely the kind of identification of Christ and Spirit that Berkhof's proposal requires. In I Cor. 15.45b the last Adam is after his resurrection described precisely as 'lifegiving Spirit' (Pneuma zoopoion) and in Romans 8, 9-11 Paul can speak of being in Christ and being in the Spirit in a way that at first sight suggests that the two phrases are interchangeable and indeed identical in meaning. Commenting on I Cor. 15.45b James Dunn can write

Immanent christology is for Paul pneumatology: in the believer's experience there is no distinction between Christ and Spirit. This does not mean of course that Paul makes no distinction between Christ and Spirit. But it does mean that later Trinitarian dogma cannot readily look to Paul for support at this point. A theology that reckons seriously with the egeneto of John I.14 must reckon just as seriously with the egeneto implied in I Cor. 15.45.

(James D.G.Dunn I Corinthians 15.45 - last Adam, life-giving spirit in Christ and Spirit in the New Testament
ed. B.Lindars and S.S.Smalley, 1973, p.139).

On the showing of such a statement Dunn would have to be ranged with Berkhof and Moule. Spirit is the mode of action of the post-resurrection Christ, and in view of the text he is expounding that is a credible conclusion. However casting his eyes more widely over the Pauline writings Dunn in Jesus and the Spirit reaches a conclusion that is much more sympathetic to a fully trinitarian understanding of the Spirit:

As far as Paul is concerned there is what might be called a 'Trinitarian' element in the believer's experience. It is evident from Paul that the first Christians soon became aware that they stood in a dual relationship - to God as Father, and to Jesus as Lord. This relationship and awareness of it was attributed by them to the Spirit (Rom 8.15: I Cor. 12.3). That is to say, Christians became aware that they stood at the base of a triangular relationship - in the Spirit, in the sonship to the Father, in service to the Lord.
(Dunn: Jesus and the Spirit, 1975, 326).

Thus alongside texts which assert the identity of Christ and Spirit like I Cor. 15.45, Dunn draws our attention to passages in Paul that provide a basis for a distinction between Christ and Spirit, like Rom 8.15 and I Cor 12.3. If we look closely at these latter passages and compare them with those in other parts of the New Testament that make the same sort of distinction, we shall discover that they tend to occur in confessional and doxological contexts. In Cor 12.3, for example, the distinction between Jesus and Spirit becomes clear because in the confession 'Jesus is Lord' Jesus is the object of the confession, the one who is confessed, who stands on the other side of the relationship from the believer who confesses him. The Spirit is not the object of the confession, but stands on the side of the one making the confession, enabling him to make it. We do not confess that the Spirit is Lord; rather the Spirit opens us up to confess one who is distinct from us and also distinct from the Spirit. It would of course be going too far to infer that Paul was implying anything like a distinction of persons here, but he does imply a distinct divine presence at both ends of a relationship, The Lord who is confessed and the Spirit who enables the confession. The Spirit is in the closest relationship to Christ but here distinguishes himself from him in an action that has Christ as its object but the Spirit as its enabling subject.

A parallel and even more explicit contrast may be discerned in Matthew 16.17, where in response to Peter's Caesarea Philippi, Jesus responds, 'Blessed are you, Simon bar Jona, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father in heaven'. The confession is about Jesus and in response to Jesus. Jesus does not make it. He asks his question: 'Who do you say I am?' and the answer to it is Peter's own. Nevertheless, although the confession is Peter's he is not the only or ultimate source of it. In the confession of Peter, Jesus discerns not

the human insights of the flesh and blood of the disciple, but the revelatory activity of his Father, which he himself does not control. The trouble with this passage for our purposes is that it attributes the revealing activity to the Father rather than the Spirit, perhaps in line with Matthew 11.27 where Father and Son have the exclusive ability of making each other known. However, the parallel with I Cor. 12.3 is still significant in that both speak of a Christ who is confessed and a divine revelatory activity which is independent of him but which alone allows the confession to be made.

The same distinction is present even more explicitly in the Johannine Paraclete passages in the same confessional and doxological context, where the enabling of the confession and glorification of Jesus is explicitly attributed to the Paraclete/Spirit. So in John 16.14, the Spirit is said to have both a doxological and revelatory function over against Jesus, 'He will glorify me' and 'He will take from what is mine and make it known to you'. All this is the distinctive work of the allos parakletos, the 'other Counsellor' who is personally distinct from Jesus and who indeed comes when and because Jesus returns to the Father (John 14.16, 16.7). It is to this passage that Pannenberg turns in his own attempt to find a basis in the New Testament for the trinitarian distinction between Son and Spirit. Commenting especially on 'He will glorify me', he says:

Was not Jesus the recipient partner with regard to the glorification as it was granted to him by the Father in the exaltation of the crucified and resurrected Lord? And is he not the recipient partner in his glorification through his believer's confession? Is not the glorification something that happened to Jesus from outside himself? If this notion proves itself sound, then one can perhaps justify the step to the dogma of the Trinity in 381 that called the Holy Spirit the third 'Person' in God alongside the Father and the Son. (W. Pannenberg, Jesus God and Man, E.T., 1968, 179).

In confessing and glorifying Jesus, we stand over against him. He is the recipient of the worship that he receives from his Church, but the one who acts in the Church and enables him to be confessed and worshipped is the Spirit. The Spirit is not himself properly the object of any confession or worship. We do not glorify the Spirit; if we know him, it is not as the object of our knowledge but as an agent who enables us to know the Father and Son. That is not too far from what

Paul is saying in I Corinthians 2.12,

We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

Our worship is not the self-glorification of Christ, any more than what happened at Caesarea Philippi is the self-confession of Christ. He is worshipped and confessed, as Pannenberg puts it, 'from outside himself' but the origin of these acts is not wholly in the human worshippers and confessors but rather in the Spirit who is at work within them. That is a situation with which the binitarian approach of Berkhof is not able adequately to cope.

When one adds to these passages the triadic formulae in which Paul regularly distinguishes the action of the Spirit from that of Christ, one sees there is a good basis for a triadic rather than a merely diadic view in Pauline theology. To the Spirit there are attributed actions appropriate to the immanent action of God within the body of Christ. In I Cor. 12 the Spirit is the immanent distributor of the spiritual gifts within the body, whereas Christ is the Lord transcendent to the body which is to be served by the right use of these gifts (I Cor. 12, 5-6). In II Corinthians 13.14, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is that which is to be shared, but the Holy Spirit is the one who effects the koinonia, the participation in that grace. In Christ, God gives himself: in the Spirit we receive what he gives.

It is significant that it is once again in the realm of worship that the action of Christ and the action of the Spirit are most clearly differentiated by Paul, who in Romans 8 speaks of two acts of intercession for the Church - one transcendent to it where Christ intercedes at the right hand of God (8.34) and the other immanent where the Spirit at the heart of God's people intercedes for them with groanings that words cannot express (8. 26-7). The fact that the contrast may be quite undeliberate only strengthens the case that in making it Paul is giving expression to distinctions that were inherent in his experience of worship rather than imposed upon it. We might note in passing that Lampe can fit Romans 8. 26-27 into his own unitarian scheme only by saying in effect that it is not the Spirit who intercedes for us, but we who are inspired to intercede for ourselves, which makes nonsense of the very point Paul is making, that our resources for prayer are not just our own but that another than ourselves is involved in the intercession with us.

We have noted passages in the New Testament in which Christ and Spirit are in effect identified, and other passages where they execute complementary but distinct functions that imply a hypostatic differentiation between them, the distinction being more implicit in Paul and more explicit in John. We should note also Luke/Acts which makes perhaps the sharpest distinction of all between the two. In the Lukan nativity stories the Son is born but the Spirit is the agent of his conception. In the baptism story the Son receives the Spirit from the Father and who will baptize others with the Holy Spirit, although it is never quite clear to what extent at that stage Spirit is being thought of in a personal way (Luke 3. 22, 16). At the beginning of Acts the coming of the Spirit follows upon the departure of Jesus; the Spirit rather than the ascended Christ is the present acting agent in the mission of the first community, and the action of the Spirit is seen in more fully personal terms.

We should not however overemphasise the element of separation which is undoubtedly present. The Spirit has been poured out by Jesus (Acts 2.33), is himself the Spirit of Jesus (16.7) and his mission is to give witness to Jesus (1.8, 5.32). Nevertheless a Damascus road confrontation with the risen Christ is different from being filled with the Holy Spirit. Here quite evidently the precise relationship of Christ and Spirit has not carefully been worked out but the contrast between the ascended Christ and the present Spirit is quite clear and, as we have seen, is never entirely abandoned in the rest of the New Testament tradition. Even in passages where the work of the Spirit is seen as almost inextricably bound up with the work of Christ, there often comes to expression an awareness of the reality of the distinction between them, so that each does things that are not appropriate to the other.

We would therefore want to maintain that the binitarian reduction proposed explicitly by Berkhof but to some extent latent in the Christological orientation of the Western tradition, is resisted by important elements in the New Testament understanding of the Spirit that appear in several of the New Testament sources. Indeed the more the first Christians reflected on the matter the more they became aware that the Christ whom they confessed and worshipped and to whom they bore witness is to be distinguished from the Spirit who made that worship, confession and witness possible and fruitful. Of interest here is Pannenberg's suggestion that as the expectation of the imminent parousia subsided, the more the Church became aware of Christ's absence

and the Spirit's presence as in some sense taking his place - ideas prominent in Luke but also in John. The longer the time of his absence, the more they became aware that he had gone to the Father and so of the otherness of the Paraclete whom he had sent (Pannenberg op. cit. 178-9)

But if the New Testament will by no means let us all go the way with Berkhof's reduction of the Spirit to a mode of Christ, neither will it authenticate the opposite and more radical proposal of Lampe to replace the person of the Son by the person of the Spirit. In other words Lampe pushes the Lukan tendency to separate Christ and Spirit to its ultimate conclusion so that Jesus (who for Lampe has only doubtfully risen and certainly not ascended) disappears as do all other men into the mystery of unreachable eternity and we are left with the Spirit who once expressed himself in an archetypal way in the historical Jesus and now wants to express himself in a similar way to us. What in Luke is the eschatological distance of the ascended Jesus has become in Lampe his absolute disappearance. He has as little use for Christ's post-existence as he has for his pre-existence. Lampe recognises quite freely that he has departed radically from the New Testament witness in all its forms at this point. He sees that the post-existent Jesus and the continuing relationship of believers to him is central for Paul, and it is precisely for that reason that apostle speaks in a twofold way of Jesus and the Spirit rather than simply of the Spirit who for once was in Jesus. He admits that to identify Jesus and the Spirit would have been impossible for Paul and John,

Paul and John and the other New Testament writers were unable to do this because they wished to affirm the personal pre-existence of Jesus as Son of God, the personal 'post-existence' of Jesus Christ as Son of God and also experienced by present believers, and the future return of the ascended Christ in glory. (Lampe op.cit. 119)

If we will agree to jettison all this, Lampe promises us a much more coherent and unitary view of the action of God as Spirit and an escape from the perpetual subjection of pneumatology to christology, which, he claims is an inevitable consequence of Nicaean trinitarians.

But there can be no doubt, that if Paul or John had been offered such a gain at such a price, they would have reckoned it far too high. Whatever may be said about his pre-existence and his parousia, Christ's ascended presence at God's right hand and his living presence as the

central focus of the life of the believing community is so constitutive of the New Testament witness that without it the heart of the gospel is gone. Christians are people who have begun to share Christ's risen life with him, for whom indeed he has become the source and centre of life so that he lives in them and they in him. When they seek the living water of the Spirit, it is not to the Spirit himself that they turn but to the living Christ who calls them to come to him and drink (John 7. 37-39). His presence now is different from both his presence before the resurrection and his presence after the parousia, but his presence now is real presence, the presence of the same Christ in the Spirit, not his absence being replaced by the Spirit. The Spirit is not his vicar who substitutes for him when he is gone, but precisely the one in whom he is present to his people in a way that is appropriate to his post-ascension and pre-parousia relationship to them. The continuing life-sharing identification of Christ with his people, although it never becomes the merging of the one in the other, is the very esse of the Pauline gospel: we are where he is, (Ephes 2.6) and he is where we are (Gal 2.20).

Lampe writes as if his proposal to excise all that from the Christian message would ease our thinking but otherwise make little difference to the life of the Church and the believer. He could hardly be more mistaken. Our living relationship with the living Christ is the basic presupposition of practically every page of the New Testament, its reality but enhanced by the diversity of the ways in which it is expressed by the various writers. Our being in the Spirit is the way in which we are in Christ, not something that takes the place of being in Christ. It is precisely for that reason that Paul can move so freely from Christ-language to Spirit-language and back again. It is not that the two languages are alternative ways of saying the same thing, so that we can choose the one that makes things simpler for us, as Lampe would have it. Rather being in Christ and being in the Spirit are distinguishable in meaning, but inseparable and coincident in the sense that the one implies the other and they always happen together. We can be in Christ only through the action of the Spirit; the whole direction and thrust of the Spirit's work is to bring us into relationship to Christ. Lampe's proposal is unacceptable to the New Testament gospel and the faith that is based upon it, because the relationship to the post-existent Christ is not a secondary feature that can be removed without serious disturbance, but the source and centre from which everything else takes its character and in which it finds its life, its meaning, its sustenance and its renewal.

We have therefore to reject both the modern proposals for reduction from which we started as being inadequate to and inconsistent with important aspects of what the New Testament says about the relationship of Christ and Spirit. We may not absorb Christ into the Spirit with Lampe or the Spirit into Christ with Berkhof. Though their action in believers is always co-ordinated, it is never identical; though they always act in unity, they themselves are differentiated two, not undifferentiated one.

Is there any way in which we can understand the relationship between them in a more systematic way? L.S. Thornton holds that even in the Pauline contexts where the identification of Christ and Spirit appears to be closest, it is possible to make a systematic differentiation between them. Both Christ and the Spirit, he explains, indwell the Church but in different ways: Christ indwells as the content of the new life, whereas the Spirit indwells as the 'quickening agent' of the new life. We are to be conformed to the image of Christ rather than to the image of the Spirit, we are to 'put on' Christ, not the Spirit.

The Spirit is never regarded as the content of the quickened life. He is the agent of revelation who brings the content of truth to the spirit of man ... Through his instrumentality a variety of charismata are bestowed upon the members of the new community. He is the energising agent who produces these gifts.

He goes on to comment on Ephesians 3. 14-17,

In Ephesians the distinction between the indwelling of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit is clearly marked in one sentence. The writer prays for his readers 'to the Father' 'that he will grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell through faith in your hearts'. This text exactly agrees with the distinction which has already been drawn out. The bestowal of the Spirit by the Father is to have the effect of strengthening the inner life. The Spirit is the quickening cause; and the indwelling of Christ is the effect of this quickening.

(L.S.Thornton, The Incarnate Lord, 1928, 324)

Thornton's way of making the distinction between Christ and Spirit is open to criticism on two grounds. A.W. Wainwright says that is too rigid to contain the many variations of expression that Paul uses and that it imposes a systemisation that may be present in John but is not to be found in Paul (A.W. Wainwright, The Trinity in the New Testament 1962, 218-9). Nevertheless, it could still be held that Thornton helps to make explicit a factor that is implicitly present in Paul and that is of great significance for our subject.

My own criticism of Thornton would be on rather different grounds, that the distinction between Christ as content of the renewed life and the Spirit as its empowering agent does not do justice to the New Testament material. In particular it makes the role of Christ too passive and indeed impersonal. Christ is not just the passive content who is to be transferred to us by the activity of the Spirit; rather he is the one who himself establishes and maintains the relationship that we have with him, and who most actively goes on giving himself to us. I should want therefore to translate Thornton into more dynamic and relational language.

Christ indwells us and we him, in the sense that we live our renewed life in organic and continuing relationship with him. That relationship is the constituting and controlling factor. We die with Christ's death, we live his life, we share his sufferings and his victory, we pursue his mission in participation in his risen humanity and its love and power. And this is all by his initiating will and self-giving grace. Christ is the one to whom we are so related, but the Spirit is the one who stands with us on our side of the relationship and gives us the openness and receptivity of faith to be able to make our own what Christ gives. In terms of this relationship Christ is over against us as the partner to whom we are related, but the Spirit is at work with us on our side of the relationship, enabling us to receive, to confess and to give glory to the Lord.

This way of thinking about Christ and Spirit in their distinctive activity on each side of an I-Thou relationship lets us see how the personal distinction between Christ and Spirit leaves room for and supports the integrity of the personal distinction between Christ and those who believe in him. He is not merged in us nor are we merged in him. He does not take us over and we do not take him over, but he and we each remain ourselves within the context of the close relationship in which he has bound us to him.

Where the action of the Spirit is not properly distinguished from the action of Christ, there is a danger that he can be seen as imposing himself upon us from the outside in heteronomous authoritarianism, or else merging us with him in a mystical absorption, with the result in both cases that our personal integrity over against him is thrown into doubt. As Lossky puts it,

This raises again the question of the place of human persons in this union: either they would be annihilated in being united to the Person of Christ, or else the Person of Christ would be imposed upon them from without. In this latter case grace would be conceived as external in relation to freedom, instead of as being its inward flowering. But it is in this freedom that we acknowledge the Deity of the Son, made manifest to our understanding through the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

(V.Lossky, The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church, 1957, 169-70)

When we fail to distinguish the activity of the Spirit within us from the activity of Christ over against us and see Christ as both the one who is received and the one who enables our receiving, we may very easily come to think of his authority over us in far too external a way, witness the catholic authoritarianism of 'the Church says' and the Protestant authoritarianism of 'the Bible says', both which Lossky traces to the failure of Western Christendom to leave room for the inner opening and freeing work of the Spirit over against the givenness and completeness of Christ.

To return again to the model of Matthew 16, it is Christ who raises the question, 'Who do you say that I am?' But it is not he who provides or imposes the answer to it. He leaves room for Peter to make a discernment and a response which is his own over against Christ, and yet that Christ recognises to have its ultimate origin not in Peter but in a divine activity that is distinct from his own. It is this latter divine activity which is in the developing tradition ascribed to the Holy Spirit.

Where Christ and Spirit are not so differentiated, the alternative danger is that of a Christ-mysticism, where Christ does not merely impose himself upon us but absorbs us into himself, so that our freedom over against him and the personal nature of the relationship that we

have in him is, in Lossky's word, annihilated. Pannenberg makes the same point in his own way,

The differentiation of the Spirit from Father and Son thereby prevents our taking the wrong path, pantheism, which appears to lie close at hand. The Spirit of the knowledge of God in Jesus is the Spirit of God only insofar as believers distinguish themselves in such knowledge from God as creatures and from Jesus Christ as 'servants' of the Lord: precisely in the humility of this self-differentiation from God that avoids all mystical exuberance, believers prove themselves to possess God's Spirit and thus to participate in God himself (W. Pannenberg, Jesus, God and Man, 1968, 175-6)

In other words, the hypostatic distinction between Christ and Spirit undergirds and supports the distinction between believers in whom the Spirit works, and Christ and the Father as the objects of their believing.

The distinction between Christ and Spirit avoids heteronomy or absorption from the side of Christ, but it also avoids autonomy on the side of the believers as if their response to Christ could be seen as their own human work that has its ultimate ground in themselves. I must indeed know Christ for myself and appropriate to myself all that is in him for me and, as we have seen, exercise my freedom of response over against him. As a certain kind of evangelical is never tired of reminding us, the door on which he knocks must be opened from the inside. Nevertheless the faith that opens the door and receives Christ, though it is authentically ours, does not have its source in us; not our work, but God's gift. In relation to Christ our response is ours and not his, yet what we bring to him is created in us and given to us by the Spirit of faith at work in us. We respond to him for ourselves, but not by ourselves. The faith by which we trust Christ, the hope by which we look expectantly to Christ, the love by which we are bound to Christ, the power by which we serve Christ, are the gifts and fruits of this Holy Spirit within us. We bring them to Christ, but we receive them from God.

Such a doctrine of the Spirit as distinct hypostasis does justice both to our freedom over against Christ and to our dependence upon the Spirit of God as the creative source of the act of faith and all that follows from it. To use Tillich's terms in a way rather different from

his own, it delivers alike from both authoritarian heteronomy and synergistic autonomy, into a genuine theonomy where God as Son and God as Spirit is at work at both ends of our relationship with Christ, but in such a way as to preserve the personal integrity of the relationship and both of the partners to it.

To sum up then, we have found good reason, both on biblical and systematic grounds to question the adequacy not only of Lampe's unitarianism of the Spirit but of the binitarian proposal of Berkhof and Moule, which of course stands much nearer to the mainstream trinitarian tradition. If the Son is absorbed in Spirit or Spirit seen as adjectival to the Son, the basic New Testament pattern of our relationship with Christ is in danger of being distorted with consequences that are practical as well as theological. There is good reason to maintain that the New Testament writers in their different ways affirm the essential oneness of Son and Spirit but also, with varying degrees of explicitness, are aware of a personal distinction against them. When the Fathers later spoke of the homousios of Son and Spirit and of the distinction in hypostasis, a good case can be made for maintaining that they were simply explicating in their own terms patterns in God's action towards us in Christ of which the New Testament writers showed themselves to be already aware, and that therefore the New Testament gospel requires the framework of a trinitarian, rather than a unitarian or binitarian doctrine of God in order to be itself.

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St Andrew's Day, 1984

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Design for Kingship: the Deuteronomistic Narrative
Technique in 1 Kings 3: 4-15

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The intention of the author of this well presented and argued, though somewhat verbose, book is to show that 1 Kings 3: 4-15, the account of Solomon's dream at the high place at Gibeon, is a deuteronomistic composition comparable to others which have long been recognized as structural elements in the deuteronomistic history. Having reviewed recent scholarship on the deuteronomistic history since 1960, the author takes her starting point with S. Herrmann's identification of the text as an Israelite royal text modelled on the Egyptian 'Königsnovelle'. It is agreed that the text does follow this form, but the author parts company from Herrmann in arguing that it never functioned in Israel as the Königsnovelle did in Egypt, but is a form used in a rhetorical way by the deuteronomist in order to present new content, an idea of kingship based on a dialectic between the Davidic and mosaic covenants. The text is a single literary unit (and so v.14 should not be struck out as a deuteronomistic 'addition'): a framework inclusio (vv. 4-5a, 15) embraces two inclusio rings around a central focus, the outer inclusio (vv. 6a, 14) balancing the Davidic covenant of promise against the Mosaic conditional covenant, the inner inclusio (vv. 6b-7, 11-13) presenting kingship as based not on power but on divine promise, the central focus (vv. 8-9) being on the people as the elect and the king as responsible before Yahweh.

The author then goes on to investigate extensively the content of the various sections of the narrative, showing how there is a consistent use of traditional themes and ideas, which derive from royal tradition, the sapiential tradition and the Yahwistic tradition. The conclusion is then drawn that this text is a single unit, a deuteronomistic composition which functions in a way parallel to other similar deuteronomistic speeches and narratives, to mark a significant transition in the history of the people; on this occasion it is the transition between the pre-temple period when worship at the high places was permitted and the period following Solomon when the Jerusalem temple alone was legitimate for worship.

This is an excellent study which fits well with some recent work

on the deuteronomistic history, particularly that of H.D. Hoffmann. In two respects, however, it may require modification. In the first place, the recent argument of van Seters has made the notion of a particular *Königsnovelle* genre either in Egypt or in Israel very doubtful. This need not entail any drastic modification of the author's view, but it would mean that it could no longer be argued that the deuteronomist was making rhetorical use of a given literary form in a way similar to the use of the treaty form. Secondly, the case for the unity of the deuteronomistic history as a composition form from the time of the exile is assumed rather than justified; it may be that the view of many scholars that there was a pre-exilic edition of the deuteronomistic history, composed in the times of Josiah, would suit better the treatment given here to 1 Kings 3: 4-15, particularly if the latter were regarded as part of that pre-exilic edition. 1 Kings 3: 4-15 would fit well as a central element in an account of Israel's history which was designed to support Josiah and the reform he introduced into Judah. It would prove Josiah's actions to be in conformity with the divine will for the nature of Israelite kingship revealed to Solomon at Gibeon.

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